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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Council

NIC #02465-84  
23 April 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THROUGH: [REDACTED]

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National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: [REDACTED]

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National Intelligence Officer for USSR-EE

SUBJECT: Monthly Forecast and Warning Report -- USSR-EE

1. Because of the potential importance of the issue, most of the meeting was devoted to a review of unusual Soviet worldwide activities. The NIO began by briefly reviewing recent Soviet activities: more intensive military exercises within the USSR, the probable imminence of a major campaign in Afghanistan, naval operations around Indochina, Berlin air corridor restrictions, the dispatch for the first time of a carrier to Cuba and the Gulf of Mexico, and the continuation of alarmist Soviet public and private statements. He advanced four possible explanations for these actions:

- A Each activity has its own rational, including in some cases demonstration of Soviet resolve to act against US or other adversary interests; but the Soviets have not purposely enlarged or escalated activity in all areas to alarm or intimidate.
- B. Although each activity does have its own rationale, the Soviets have enlarged and escalated activity to achieve an alarming or intimidating effect, e.g., to create global anxieties that could be turned politically against the US.

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- C. The Soviets are raising the "noise/signal" ratio in preparation for some specific threatening action in the future requiring a degree of surprise; i.e., the real intent is not to alarm the US but actually to desensitize the US to higher levels of Soviet military activity.
- D. The scale of activities observed is the product of decentralized decisions, with less than normal control at the Politburo level; Soviet military authorities may be exploiting the internal political situation for their own goals.

2. Some agency representatives felt that Soviet activity represented an overall pattern intended to impress or intimidate the US and its Allies, albeit with actions that have their own discrete rationales. Some representatives, however, felt that the Soviet actions were unconnected and that any apparent pattern was primarily in the eye of the beholder.

3. Participants then discussed the Soviet treatment of the alleged threat of war. They found it comparable to some past Soviet campaigns (such as in the 1920s and the late 1940s and early 1950s) when the Soviets had played on the theme not so much out of genuine fear but for domestic or external manipulative purposes. Despite the current war hype, recent Soviet leadership speeches reveal not a fear of war but rather grave concern over the long-term political and strategic implications of the US military buildup. One participant, however, disagreed strongly. He felt that so-called past Soviet war scares had been interpretations of the international situation that were genuine even if they were not always accurate. Similarly, today the Soviet leadership is alarmed both by US rhetoric and by some US exercises (such as the unprecedented exercise of three aircraft carriers in the direction of Kamchatka). A majority remained of the view that the Soviet use of the war scare is almost entirely manipulative.

4. In their review of Soviet exercises, analysts found that the oft-used description "unprecedented" is meaningless since Soviet exercises are not repetitive but grow in size and complexity as Soviet military capabilities increase. In its own way, therefore, each year's series of exercises is "unprecedented." This year's series has been no exception and some of the exercises, such as the North Atlantic naval exercise and the more recent missile activity, have been particularly impressive. But, so far, the primary significance of the exercises has been what they reveal about evolving Soviet doctrine and military potential. Analysts also discussed Soviet reactions to Western exercises and judged that, with one probable exception, the Soviet reaction pattern has not changed very much.

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5. The NIO closed the meeting by noting the new requirement for tracking the more important issues raised at warning meetings. In response to his request for agency suggestions for issues to be tracked, the Army rep submitted a written list. All agencies were enjoined to produce similar lists by Friday 4 May at the latest.

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